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## A BOY'S FIRST FIGHT.

I was a biggish boy, of seventeen, and I wore a red jacket, and was skylarking, one summer's morning, with my companions in the yard of the farm where we were quartered. Some of us were busily hemming in a pretty little bit of an ensign, on a pony, and trying to drive him into the abomination-pond in the centre of the yard, when a man looked over the gate, and said quietly: 'There—leave off—there's better fun for you; the French are coming on.'

We had heard for the last week that about one hundred thousand of them were assembling within a few miles of us, and we were living on, just as unconcernedly as most people do live on in this world, in the midst of the hundred thousand unseen dangers which beset every path of life. Our child's play was over, man's work was before us. We assembled, we marched; but not up the lane which led to our daily drill-ground; our heads were put the opposite way; whither bound, we knew not, nor, I believe, did our leaders. The general of our division had, some days before, found out a goodly château, with a most convenient common near it, where he could exercise his men; and thither he went, taking us at least twenty miles from the place where we were supposed to be, and close to the French frontier. We had now to rejoin the army without a moment's delay, if we could, which was doubtful, for nothing definite was known as to the movements which might be taking place on either side.

The first sign of war I saw was a beacon by the roadside, which had been fired, and partly burned down. There was no one near it. The hounds had been there, but there was no trace of them. After a tolerably long day's march, we were halted to rest on a nice bit of roadside common. Everybody threw himself on the turf, to make the most of the few minutes; and all was quiet—strangely quiet.

What's the matter? What are they listening to? What are those old hands laying their ears to the ground for?

Don't you hear the firing?

No. Listen.

There! No doubt about it.

Oh! I can hear it quite plain. Musketry, and heavy guns, too! It's a general action; they are at it, and we here!

You have seen hounds in cover, when first they catch the scent—a mere suspicion, not yet to be confirmed by the tongue—how their bristles will rise, and their whole frame quiver. So it was with the men; they were transfigured. Those who a minute before were only trying to snatch forty winks, had started to their feet, were gathering in little knots, speculating eagerly on what was to come; but there was no noise beyond a busy angry hum.

The march was resumed, and continued steadily till dusk, when we halted just outside of a town, and hoped for rations. Instead thereof, there came rushing by a raw Irish regiment, shouting like madmen. The contempt with which our old soldiers looked down upon this noisy demonstration was quite beyond words.

On we went, in darkness, rain, hunger, and thirst; on, on, until long after midnight, when the rain had become a deluge, we halted in a wretched hamlet, and were told to expect about three hours' rest, but no food. I got into a stable, threw myself on some straw, my head on a saddle, and subsided into a sort of half-dreamy repose; but others came in, and we began to discuss our prospects, under our breath, lest the men should hear, for it was believed that the French were between us and our army, and that our chance of rejoining it was a bad one. We were four in that stall, and gloomy enough. Two have long been in their graves, the third is a jolly old general, and as to me—never mind.

Day broke—the march was taken up. One of the men near me had got at drink somehow, and shewed it. His own comrades attacked him angrily. He pleaded killing weather, fatigue, emptiness; it was but little; it could never else have got into his head, &c.: but they would listen to no excuses. Drink, they said, was all very well

at proper times—a capital thing, no doubt; but before the enemy, never! He was a disgrace to the regiment.

The weather improved, and we woke up into better humour. Coming to the brow of a little hill, there appeared a single figure coming down the opposite slope towards us. A soldier—Belgian uniform—arm in a sling. 'He has been in the fray—now we shall know something.' But he could not make himself understood, seemed to have had quite enough of fighting, and was evidently making for his home. His wound was looked on as a sham, and himself as a deserter. He was hooted out of sight—nothing loath. About mid-day we halted in a pleasant meadow, and hopes were held out of rations. The officers of my company sent off one to a little town in sight, to get something eatable. And now up came a lad, in high spirits at having carried his point, at any rate. He had been on leave at Brussels when the alarm came, and at once determined to make his way to his regiment. He had been walking all night, and having started, as he was, in dancing-shoes, had soon worn them clean out. He had seen no actual fighting, and could only say that it had been heavy, and the result doubtful. He told us Major —, a staff-officer, who had been much with us, and was universally liked, had lost a leg. 'Poor fellow; what a horseman he was! His hunting is over!' This was realising the matter to us—bringing it home to our bosoms. It was the first blow; but there was not much time to think of it. Our caterer returned with a large loaf like a life-buoy—a common shape then—smoking hot, and a bottle of Curaçoa, both which were disposed of in an instant. There were rations at hand, we were told; but time was too precious to wait for them, and we went on our way.

Presently there was a startling sound. Our suspicious imaginations made it a fire of musketry close at hand. It was only a long, rattling peal of thunder, the first of a long series of heavy storms.

Another alarm! On a rising-ground, some way off, came into view a strong body of men. Were they friends or enemies? If the latter, they were too many for us. All right—they were allies—the risk of being cut off was at an end—we were up with the army. But where had we been wandering ever since yesterday morning? I never knew. I have in after-times often asked men who should have known, but never got an answer.

Once more we halted; the wagons with the meat actually came up; but it was announced that the French were close upon us, and there was not time to cook it. The meat was put back into the wagons, and the retreat—for such it doubtless was—went on. And now the plot began to thicken. On all sides were seen troops of various nations, hurrying on in the same direction as ourselves. The road became choked. Once, in a regular jam with some ammunition-wagons, a violent thunder-squall came on, and I began to speculate on the possible effects of a flash of lightning. We had to wait some little time, and I lay down in the long rye by the roadside. I was violently heated, and thirsty, and refreshed myself by sucking the ears of corn, which were so drenched by the heavy rain, that each was a sort of wet sponge.

The foreigners began to give out, and lie down by the roadside, in constantly increasing numbers. Most conspicuous among them were some huge Dutchmen, with enormous beards—things not

then usually worn. They made no attempt to conceal their alarm, and I began to doubt how the feeling that our allies were good for nothing might affect our men. It was satisfactory, however, to see that they seemed to look upon it as unmitigated fun. The passage of any staff-officer was eagerly watched, in the hope of picking up information. I overheard one say, in answer to some inquiries about our retreat: 'Oh, we shan't have to go much further. He is going to make a stand at a place called, I believe, Waterloo, or some such name.'

From the crowded state of the road, checks were now become very frequent. On one occasion, hearing an odd kind of noise close to me, I looked up, and saw a wagon of wounded men. It was utterly unexpected, and I only hope I did not shew how it shocked me. Two figures I see now. One had been shot in the mouth; the whole face had swelled till the features were undistinguishable. It was one cake of blood, and where the mouth had been was a hole, from which came sounds that were not human. In contrast to him sat a very fine-looking man in a greatcoat, which concealed his hurt. His face was deadly pale, and wore an expression of deadly suffering; but he maintained absolute silence.

We passed through the town of Braine-le-Comte, which looked entirely deserted by the inhabitants. It was occupied by some foreign troops, who, we understood, were to stay and meet the advance of the French. One company got under arms at a sort of guard-house, in compliment to us, as we passed. They looked, officers and men, dismal—fornlorn without the hope. I could not help admiring the endurance of our men. They had started about nine or ten on the morning of the 16th; had been marching through drenching rain and violent storms until now, the afternoon of the 17th, with very trifling halts, and no rations. They had breakfasted before starting, and had little or no opportunity of picking up any food by the way (I had only my share of the hot bread and Curaçoa); and here they were, going on without apparent fatigue, and without a murmur. Well, all things come to an end. We turned off the road, upon a rising-ground, which shewed other regiments forming line, as we did. The position was reached, the march was over. As I was looking round, to see what was coming next, I was accosted by an old Peninsular captain with a grim smile: 'Well, —, here's the butcher's shop. How do you like it?' But the real butcher's shop came; we got the meat, and some spirits, and fed at last. I contrived to get a capital bundle of straw, and lay down (thatching myself with it, for the thunder-showers were constant) on a slope, from which I could see all that was passing. Before me spread one wide level, mostly in corn, with no enclosures or woods to break the view. Across it, at the distance of more than a mile, ran long lines of British cavalry, formed to cover our retreat. Beyond, in the distance, I could make out the French line. The guns I could not distinguish, until they opened fire; then the smoke, settling in a little thunder-cloud above each battery, mapped them out. I could see the lines shifting, wavering, advancing, retreating, but was too far off to make out anything more than that a skirmish on a grand scale was going on—then our side seemed to gain ground—and then the squall seemed over. There is a horseman coming from the fight, at speed, right towards us. He pulls up close to a party of our

officers, throws the reins on his horse's neck, and bursts out a-laughing. His horse is in a lather, but himself in the highest spirits. This is the Duke of —, a captain in our regiment, but serving on the head-quarter staff; and he is laughing because he has just seen the Life Guards ride over the French. (He did not tell us, what we heard afterwards, that some of our light cavalry had first failed to do so.) What is that astounding rattle on the right? And what are all our fellows clapping their hands and shouting for, as if it were the best fun in the world? It is the whole baggage-train of the British army in a panic, fleeing for their lives along the paved road, bound for Brussels. And it is no joke at all. It is only fright now; but all through the night will be plunder and destruction—robbery and murder—women and children upset into the canals and drowned. The loss of life was great; the conduct of very many infamous. It was a shocking and disgraceful business; but it was hushed up. Victory, like Charity, covered the multitude of sins; and in the ocean of our losses, this drop was of no account. Again we stood to our arms, and moved off, I carefully carrying my precious truss of straw under my arm. The two armies were in motion—in presence—in full view. The prattle of skirmishers began, grew angry, died away. The sun, just before setting, came forth from his frowning host of storm-clouds, threw one wild gleam of light over the awful scene, and disappeared. 'Are we going to work now?' I asked the little fellow by my side (a boy in years, in service a veteran).

'Not to-night, I think; it's too late.'

'What a beautiful sight!—isn't it?' I could not help saying.

With a grave, sad smile of superior experience, he replied: 'Wait till to-morrow night; tell me then how beautiful you think it.'

We kept changing our ground, and at every move I lost some of my straw. Blundering through the dark and wet, the last of it went before we came to our final position. Very quickly the opposite ridge was lighted up by the fires of the French army, making themselves happy for the night. What a range of them; and how I envied them! We had nothing of the sort. The fitful fire of outposts—every now and then like a small battle—burned out. The last sounds I heard were the constant rush of the rain, and the constant wail of some poor baby near me. I had not so much as a great-coat, but I slept what the French call 'the sleep of the just'; or what, according to the penny-a-liners is quite as good, the sleep of the man who is going to be hanged to-morrow. On waking in the morning, I found I could not have turned once the whole night, for the side next the ground was perfectly dry and warm. But that seemed all there was of me; the upper side, on which the rain had been beating, had no feeling at all. The general effect was helpless. (Some months after, I saw at Ramsgate a young man in a wheel-chair, and was told he had been paralysed from exposure to wet, the night before Waterloo.) The next thing was a bit of rough pathos, the women taking leave of their (irregular) husbands. Few words were spoken—a few tears were shed; a good deal of real strong feeling seemed suppressed on both sides, and they were gone.

I was trying to shake myself up and be alive, when my kind captain came by. 'You look very ill,' he said; 'there will be nothing doing just yet

a while; go down to that cottage. I have just come from it. You will find a fire there. Make yourself comfortable. You'll know by the firing when it's time to come back.' I went, and found a miserable hut—four bare walls and a mud floor. Crouching in the opposite corners of the hearth, over some smouldering embers, were an old man and a little boy, both crying bitterly. I sat down between them, made up the fire, found a crock of water and a few potatoes, and set to work to roast them—and myself. I made a hearty breakfast. Not one word passed between us. They crying, I eating and drinking, and rubbing my hands over the embers. But all was silent, except the musketry, which more than once drove me to the door. I ought to go back; but, hang it! said I to myself, this is too luxurious a fireside to leave yet. At last came a burst of fire that allowed no further doubt, and away I ran, back to my company, was complimented on my good looks and my early return; for they said: 'Oh, this is nothing yet. You'd better come into the hut.' Our servants had by this time made a gipsy hut of boughs, with plenty of dry straw in it: where they could have got either, I have no notion; but they were handy lads. Four of us tumbled in, and pigged together. I dropped asleep instantly, and knew nothing more, till I was roused by their jumping up, and followed their example. Our general's aide-de-camp was walking his horse by; he turned his head towards us, and said very coolly: 'Enemigo!' The one word of Spanish, and the knowing smile, told plainly that old times were come again.

Now for it then!

Without signal or word of command, the men just walked to the piles of arms, and formed their ranks.

Here comes the old quarter-master, radiant; he has got something good for us. Yes, a little very precious oil for the musket-locks; and the men seemed fully to appreciate the value of it—to feel that each man's life might depend on his piece not missing fire. Each proceeded to uncover and oil his lock; for I think there were none who had not contrived some protection against the rain; very many had stripped off their woollen socks for the purpose. We got the word to 'load,' the ramrods rang, and a thousand rare soldiers stood ready for anything.

A short move brought us into our place; we formed close column. The men stood at ease, officers fell out, and lounged about, chatting as at an ordinary parade. I noticed our adjutant, an old Peninsula man, lying down on his face, as if asleep; but I could make out that he was saying his prayers.

We were just behind the ridge which formed our position, so that we could see nothing. A pause. It seemed a long one; even those chatterboxes, the skirmishers, were silent.

Bang! went an English gun, on the ridge just before us; and, as if it were a spell that had raised legions of devils, gun followed gun, until all individual explosions were swallowed up in one wild roar, under which might be made out the sharp treble of the musketry. Clouds of smoke began to gather, and out of them, from time to time, darted a long shrill French scream. The Americans in this last war appear to pride themselves on what they call 'yelling,' to have reduced it to a system, and to look on it as an important branch of the art of war. But the English of that

day did their bloody work, for the most part, in silence. The first cannon-shots sailed over us sky-high; but they soon began to fall unpleasantly near. If you sit by the open window of a railway carriage, and if, quite unexpectedly, an express-train passes, you will hear something like a cannon-shot close to you. The first thing struck in our ranks was a horse. *Prince Regent* had cost over a hundred guineas only a few days before. It was only a graze. As far as I could see, it did not draw blood or break the skin; but it broke a bone: there he stood, with one leg hanging loose. The next was a worse case. Our sergeant-major was expecting his ensign's commission, and another sergeant was acting as his second, and daily looking for his promotion. The rush of a shot! near! nearer! Smack among us! a little bustle—one man down. It is the poor sergeant, his leg crushed. In a few minutes his life-blood was on the field, and he at rest.

Soon men began to drop faster: the enemy had got our range. The clever old soldier in command just moved us about twenty yards to the right. Such a change was repeated at intervals. I did not see any of the other regiments in the brigade doing so. Their losses were heavier than ours; and I have always attributed the difference to this simple but sensible dodge.

The wetness of the ground was much in our favour under this fire. Shells would sink so deep that they exploded either not at all or harmlessly, throwing up great fountains of mud. But there were marvellous escapes. I saw one fall at the foot of an officer, who, instead of getting out of the way, stood as if petrified; but it never burst. Another went into the ground just behind a man who was lying down; he rolled lazily over on his side, and began to scrape with his hand the hole it had made, as if trying to find it. That, too, did not burst. And just by me a shell struck a man's knapsack, exploded, and scattered it in all directions—tore it to smithereens without hurting the wearer, who stood gaping as if he could not understand why all his comrades were laughing at him.

Here comes our second in command, good Sir Rowland Hill, on a great fat coach-horse, and looking as if no less a creature could carry him. But the composure with which he and his staff walked by, while the shot was dropping all around them, was perfect. The storm was so heavy in front of us (Hougomont) that we began to think it high time something should come of it, and to feel, rather than acknowledge, some anxiety on the subject. A group came slowly towards us from that quarter—six men carrying something in a blanket. We must have lost some officer of rank (it was General Cooke); for in those days men were not allowed, except in special cases, to leave the ranks to attend on the wounded while fighting was going on; nor were surgeons allowed to be under fire.

The next sufferer got along without help; it was a poor horse wandering slowly to the rear, with his head hanging down, almost as if he were grazing. I thought at first there was nothing the matter with him, but as he came nearer, I saw he had only half a head: a cannon-shot had carried away all the lower part. One of the men was ordered to take a musket, and put him out of his misery.

There is a yell, worthy of America, a long way off. What can that be? Far out of the reach of shot, was an immense patch of yellow, from

which these fierce sounds proceeded: it was a body of 'braves Belges' shouting to keep up their spirits.

At last up rode an aide-de-camp to our column; he was a very young one indeed, and in a very great fuss.

'Are the — loaded?'

A chuckle from the ranks was the only answer. He muttered some hasty order, and was going off as fast as he came.

'Stop, stop! young gentleman,' says the colonel; 'don't be in such a hurry. Let us hear distinctly what you have got to say.'

It was an order to advance; and right gladly we obeyed it; for idleness, a curse at any time, is at such times the hardest trial men can have. The first sight of the battle-field was rather a disappointment to me, though I don't quite know what I expected. Along the ridge, groups of figures were busy in the smoke. There were our guns. At intervals were masses of men, doing nothing. Small bodies of cavalry were riding about, and occasionally attacking one another. Altogether, it rather put me in mind of some of the stage directions in Shakspeare's battles: 'Alarums, Excursions—Chambers go off.' One little episode I almost hesitate to describe, because it does not sound at all like what it is—true to the letter. I saw it distinctly; it took place at a very small distance from me. Out of the smoke two small parties of cavalry—not above ten or a dozen in each—rushed into collision, as if unawares; pistol-shots were rapidly exchanged, saddles as rapidly emptied; away went the horses back into the smoke in various directions, not one rider left; and the whole was enacted in less time than you have taken to read it.

We took up the ground which had been occupied by the Black Brunswickers, and still was occupied by a large number of them, poor fellows! Very honestly had they been fighting; very thick they lay. Close to me was the body of an officer, quite dead. As it was a leisure moment, and I had never had a fair view of a dead man before, I determined to take a good steady look at him, and felt much the better for it. He was not disfigured—quite placid, but as yellow as any duck in the market.

We now formed, not one, but two squares, because we were so strong—above one thousand bayonets. The French cavalry had by this time got possession of the field, but could never hold it; they came and went. Every now and then, they would drive our artillerymen from their guns; I saw at one time seventeen guns in a row, abandoned. The gunners, as well as all general and staff officers, would take shelter in the squares, just as you pop into a shop in a shower, and beg leave to wait till the rain is over; and the squares became crowded with inconvenient guests. I remember one couple in particular, because the horse trod on my toes. He was a hot chestnut, but now sadly nervous—could not stand still for an instant. The rider was a curious contrast. His natural temper was one of the most irritable I ever knew; but a scene like this steadied him, and he sat like a statue. By the by, I did not in one single instance see a horse in the rampaging attitudes which battle-painters are so fond of. No ha! ha! no mocking at fear. They are not the animals they were in Job's days, or has gunpowder made the difference? They do sniff the



battle, poor brutes, and realise the danger. Some, indeed, shewed no unusual symptoms. Here and there (rarely) was a case of frantic fright. More frequently, it was quiet quaking, shivering from head to foot.

And now our turn came: the cuirassiers were going to try us. Very calmly our colonel gave his directions, quite in a conversational tone: 'Now, mind, men—no firing till I give the word, and I shan't do that till they are within thirty yards.' On they came at a trot—the ground was too deep for any faster pace—officers in front, cheering them on, as the French soldier expects his officer to do. It was mere murder. I do not think the distance could have been thirty yards, when a clear gentlemanly voice said: 'Ready! Present!' A flash and a crack from the face of the square. A heap of them were down. 'The rest they run away,' as the nursery rhyme has it. The cavalry tried us no more. A large part of that wonderfully fine body of troops was disheartened and wasted in such hopeless attacks: it was one of the great mistakes of that great day.

In our turn, we advanced, still in square. We went over the ridge, and a little way down the slope; but the enemy were too many; we were in a perfect cloud of skirmishers, and a mark they could not miss: nearly surrounded by them. It was an ugly moment. There was a call for the Rifles, who were near us, to go at them, and gallantly the green-coats dashed into the skirmish. The two lines were almost hand to hand, without the slightest shelter. The Rifles dropped so fast, that I thought they were done; but the French dropped faster, and were driven off after a short struggle, too deadly to last. It gave us relief; but we had to walk back—we did not run—to our old ground.

Soon after, the square was reduced, and we formed line just behind the ridge. I was tall enough to see over it; and here began a long, long, weary stand. For want of something better to do, I got watching a French gun, exactly opposite to me. The flash came in very regular time, and then the shot would whiz right over my head, and drop in the bottom of the valley behind, among our allies. I was trying for an epithet, but the less said the better. Time after time, savage screams of 'Vive Napoléon!' would break out, announcing a fresh attack. Very fierce they were, long, destructive, and only not successful. They took the name of their god of battle in vain. A cannon-shot struck the ensign who carried one of the colours, smashed his raised arm and the colour-staff, and went through his heart. Without a word, he fell forward on the colour. A sergeant stepped up in his place; down he went instantly. Another succeeded, only to share the same sudden fate. There was a moment's hesitation before the next for duty took the deadly post; but the storm was over, and all through it the other ensign stood unharmed beside the dead.

Looking round to watch the flight of one of the shots going to the rear, I was aware of 'the Duke' quite close to me, and entirely alone, walking his horse slowly along in rear of the regiment, shot falling all around him; his expression of countenance was, if you please, immovable determination, but I am bound to confess it was the opposite of pleasing.

I had asked my brother-subaltern rather early in the day: 'Is this what you call much of a fight?'

'No,' he said; 'nothing very extraordinary.'

Some time after, I repeated the question, and got a similar answer; but rather, I fancied, in a short tone; so I thought I had better not ask any more. But now he came up, and whispered in my ear: 'Well, I never did see anything like this.' So I felt satisfied. Presently, a sergeant came round to him (our post was in rear of the ranks), and said: 'Please, Mr —, come and take command of the company. Your brother's down, sir!' Without a word—without a change of feature—the young Stoic went and did it.

The persecution our poor captain underwent was singular. A grazing-shot on the head knocked him down, stunned. Trying to get up on his knees, his back towards the enemy, a musket-ball struck the sole of his foot, and made a bad wound. Staggering off as he best could, he leaned, for a moment's rest, against an abandoned gun; a cannon-shot instantly shattered the carriage of it, throwing him down with no further hurt.

As soon as the fighting was over, his two brothers, both officers in the regiment, started in search of him; for the greater part of that night, they rambled over the ground we had been working on, in vain. They used to say it was too horrid a scene to talk about. At last, hopeless and worn out, they took shelter in a hut, where was only a French officer, shockingly wounded. They did what they could for him—got him a drink of water—and dropped asleep by his side. When they woke in the morning, he was dead. They had to rejoin the ranks and march with us; nobody knew anything about their brother. He did well, however; and yet lives, a prosperous gentleman.

We know the lull that will occur in a gale of wind, until one really begins to hope it is over; but there comes a sigh, a sob, a breeze, gust upon gust, and the roar returns as if the spirit of the storm were only bent on making up for lost time. There was more than one lull of this kind; but at no time would the noise make conversation inaudible, and any sound at all unusual would attract notice.

A slight but general groan from the ranks made me turn my head. I saw the colonel sinking back on his horse, and the men catching him. The groan was from them—a token of their affectionate regard almost unprecedented—the only demonstration of feeling I remember that day. The calm indifference of those 'red men' was like what we read of the Indians, but for a moment it was overcome. And he was a disciplinarian, too; the best I ever knew.

Well, things were undeniably looking bad—and growing from bad to worse. There were symptoms of exhaustion and discouragement, and not on the enemy's side. My neighbour touched my arm, and without a word, pointed to the right; there were men running, and they were English.

Right in our front the fire blazed up afresh, and the screams of 'Vive l'Empereur!' growing more and more distinct, told of a coming attack. Our line was formed four deep, and (how, I do not exactly remember) we became aware that at last we were going to be sent forward—that the time was come for Greek to meet Greek. We woke up as from a dull and dismal dream, to real life and action. We had as yet done nothing, except that little brush with the cavalry. For how many

hours had we been suffering! Our losses, comparatively, had not been heavy; but the full and hideous effect of every shot that struck was displayed before us, and we had to stand and watch it, hopelessly. It was as bad as sipping your medicine, and that medicine the bitterness of death. But now the load was off us, the nightmare at an end. All the feelings so long pent up were loosened, and working into fury. At last we were free to shew what we too could do. But as yet there was no visible change; we still stood behind that ridge, not seeing the approaching column, and unseen by them. Our commanding officer, with two or three of the mounted staff, was on the brow, watching the enemy. Now he is coming back to us; now he puts us in motion. As we topped the rise, we had to break and pass between our guns, which ceased firing, the gunners cheering us as we went by—their sleeves tucked up, their hands and faces devilishly black; and hot, reeking hot they looked. They are passed, and here are the enemy, coming on at a run, and uproarious. The sudden apparition of our formidable line moving down upon them, so firm, so steady, in such awful silence, unmistakably staggered them. Their voices hushed; they came to a stand; they delivered a weak spattering fire, which, though so close, did little harm. Then came our volley, and then a pause, for one tremendous moment, till the smoke should lift and shew us the effect.

They are down—broken, crushed, fleeing all who can! British phlegm, British discipline could keep quiet no longer; out rung a cheer, which none there, French or English, would forget while they lived. Every bugler in the regiment sounded the 'Advance'—kept sounding it over and over again. Forward over the wreck we stalked.

From that moment, our advance, in spite of momentary checks, was never stopped till we drew up at the finish—at La Belle Alliance—in the fore-front of the whole British battle.

The horrors of our progress were not unmingled with ludicrous incidents. Here was the first piece of plunder I ever saw. One of the men, as he ran on, stooped, twitched a knapsack off a dead Frenchman's back, and throwing his firelock into the hollow of one arm, proceeded to rummage it with the other. Out flew letters, letters—nothing else. The more angrily he shook it, the more the papers fluttered. A nice prize—a knapsackful of *billets-doux*! The laugh was against him, and he flung it away with a curse.

We were now coming up to a second line, which seemed disposed to make a stand behind a little bank, on which, to all appearances, had grown yesterday a hedge—now levelled. As we came close, the enemy's hearts failed them—they broke and fled. A few, who could not make up their minds in time, were bayoneted. Forward, forward, over man and horse, and wreck of all sorts cumbering the ground! Since I spoke of things looking so ill, a very short time had elapsed, but the change was as sudden and complete as a shifting scene in a pantomime. We were still leading, but the whole British army was coming on at our back. So forward were we that some of our own shells began to fall among us. A messenger was sent back to the offending artillery; but the commanding officer was indignant at the supposition that he was capable of making such bad practice.

Suddenly we found ourselves on the brink of a deep hollow road, with steep clay-banks, very slippery from the rain. It was choked with French, huddled together like sheep in a pen; French in dismay, crying for quarter. We slid down; our men snatched the French muskets, broke the stocks against the ground, flung away the barrels, left the disarmed crowd to be dealt with by our people in the rear—there were awkward stories of some of these defenceless men having been massacred by our allies—scrambled up the other bank, formed as good a fighting-line as ever, and forward, forward! There was a sudden cry of 'Cavalry!' a little uneasiness at being caught by them in line. But the word was passed: 'Remember you are four deep; it's as good as a square.' (We had been trained for any such sudden emergency. Any individual officer, in case of disorder, was to give the word: 'Form rallying square,' and collect in that form any stragglers near him; and I know one case in which that was now done.) But the men steadied in a moment. Out of the smoke rushed a mob of horsemen upon us. It was an English cavalry regiment, driven by and mixed up with a French one. Right on us they came; in self-defence, we gave them our fire: it was deadly. French and English broke and vanished in the smoke as quickly as they had come into view. I heard of a British cavalry officer killed in our ranks, unable to make the men understand that he was not a Frenchman. The disaster was no fault of ours.

Forward again. We were now getting near some French guns, which opened upon us, and down went a lot of men. A chattering in my ears, the like of which I had never heard, made me call out: 'What's that?' An old sergeant, touching his cap, with a grim smile at the youngster's ignorance, replied: 'Grape, sir.' It was no small satisfaction to see the gunners cutting the traces of the teams and riding off. Every moment came fresh signs that the end was at hand. On the rising-ground about Mont St Jean, some of our batteries, which had been silent, broke out again fast and furious; and out came the sun, just as he had done on the previous evening. The sky was just as wild and stormy. But how gloomy had he looked then—how bright and smiling now to me! and how to the unfortunate French? Then did I call to mind the saying of my brother-subaltern as to yesterday's sunset scene; and I asked myself: Well, is it beautiful now? No. It was highly satisfactory—it was triumphant, glorious, &c., as much as you please; but beautiful it was not. In sober truth and plain English, a very ugly sight it was.

A bugler near me was taking a hearty pull at his canteen. 'Have you any to spare?' 'Yes, sir.' It was water, and that was the drink of my life. I remember none so refreshing. I offered him money, which he would not hear of, and he was right—it was beyond price.

Our brave old quarter-master was just came up. I heard him behind me calling to the men: 'Now, my boys, I've brought you some rum; you'll have it directly.' This was even more welcome than the oil which he had produced as a morning whet.

We were still heading the pursuit. Resistance was over; but amid that scattered and terrified crowd might be seen four battalions marching off the lost field in close and soldier-like array. All honour to such unshrinking gallantry; but being

on the losing side, I take it they never got much.

We were now at La Belle Alliance, on the crest of the French position; daylight was fading; we halted. 'Let the men fall out,' and down they dropped, exhausted. Firing had ceased, except a few pops from some skirmishers of the 95th, who, determined to have the last word, had passed us, and gone down the slope after the fleeing French. It must have been prudence bought by sore experience that, at such a moment, could make some of our old officers say, as I heard them say, gravely shaking their heads: 'Oh, this is not right! Don't you remember in the Peninsula, at — and —, how the beggars came back when we made sure they were done? They'll be upon us again in the dark; the men should be kept together, and ready.'

But there was no need; they never came back. The fight was over, and we were the Victors.

### THE SEASONS.

WE are some of us too fond of bemoaning the monotony of our existence or occupation. This is a wearisome bad habit, for if we would believe and see it, we really move through a series which is marvellously corrective of ennui. The earth spins round at a rate so prodigious that it seems to sleep upon its pole; but there is, in fact, so constant a change about and within us, that if we keep our eyes and minds open, we shall not lack a perpetual supply of entertaining and useful instruction. I do not mean that dreary sort of instruction which would make the world into a lecture-room, and set us improving every scene and event with a conceited importunate strain after statistical information and the like; but rather that which is imperceptibly wholesome, and which many miss, from a dogged assumption that there is nothing new under the sun, and that therefore the less they observe the things about them, the more they enjoy life. The worst kind of man of the world eschews any lively interest in it whatever. He is never surprised, never carried out of himself, and therefore, in whatever society he may mix, is never without dull company.

Let us begin with Winter, which not only has its special charms of outer beauty and social life, but is the pregnant time of the whole year. There is much in common among spring, summer, and autumn. They are more or less outdoor seasons, for though with us the frost sometimes steals soon upon the dying leaf, and hangs on far into the spring, yet by winter proper, I understand the period when the tree is naked and the grass stationary. Growth seems to stop. Nature furls her sails, and lies at anchor under bare poles. Then we see the masts and rigging of creation. We appreciate the fundamental beauties of shape and proportion. Then radical ugliness betrays itself. I think if I had to choose a house in the country, I would see it in winter. If the surroundings were well moulded and arranged, I might decide with confidence, for a beautiful form is the best foundation for a becoming dress. Foliage and flowers may hide an ill-made figure; they cannot, at least not when put on by Mother Nature, spoil a good one; therefore would I choose my homestead when it was stripped bare; I would have a sort of medical examination of my prospect, as the surgeon has of a recruit. Then it might clothe itself in uniform as soon as it pleased.

But though Nature is stripped in winter, it chooses that time for freaks in fancy dresses. Having put off its ordinary clothes for a while, it tries on the diamonds of the hoar-frost, and the drapery of the snow. We wake some morning to see every naked twig decked in abundant jewels, soon flung upon the ground when disturbed by the rough day, but brilliant for an hour. What a sense of change and fresh power must come over the water, too, when it is frozen! Once the slave of the winds, now it refuses to rise up and dance, let the storm be ever so imperious. It sees the reed upon its surface bend and writhe, with hardened impunity. It shuts its doors to the vulgar ducks and geese which claimed it as their own, and now stagger about in surprised exclusion. It enjoys an escape from all its familiar duties, and a capability of resistance which must be grateful to a compliant nature. The weary waves sleep in peace under their roof. And if the winter brings its peculiar rest and change to the ripple, the flower, and the leaf, so does it relieve man by social recreation. Indoor nations are the most domestic. The circle of each home is the stronger and clearer, and therefore all the home virtues exert themselves without waste when a family feels its own four walls about it. People who are for ever out of doors, sitting on benches in front of a café, or creeping about in groups to listen to a band, or anyway continually mixing with their neighbours in gregarious civilisation, lose the freshness of home-life. Now, Christmas corrects this loose sociability in many Europeans, specially, I believe, Englishmen. Winter is the home season. Even the interchange of hospitalities then brings out more sharply the charms and resources of each house. The evenings are long, the lamp is lit early. In summer, people fidget for a change, and want to go to London, or the seaside, or abroad; but winter ties them to their own hearth—they sit round the fire. All the pursuits and peculiarities which are suited to close intercourse come uppermost then. While summer is the time for lovers, winter is the time for families. There is no sitting about in the garden, no sauntering in the wood and lane, no lying in the shade. However vigorously some outdoor sports may then occupy the short day, people are at home as they are never else throughout the year.

So also is Nature. Then she withdraws into her recesses, and fashions within doors the leaf, the blade, and the blossom, which come out when the summer shines. Nature looks dead in winter only because her life is gathered into its home. She is no more dead than a country-house, round which the wind whistles or the snow falls, but where the children romp in the nursery, and the old folks sit over the fire. Mother Nature calls her family together within her strongholds, presently to spread themselves out upon the face of the earth. She marks the preparation for fresh life by a severe discarding of much that is feeble and worn. Whatever has small promise of her future within it, she puts on one side, or drops. The old and the sickly are cut down; health and strength are tried. In screwing up the wires of her instrument, many snap, and are rejected. We are braced, but we are strained by winter.

How different are the first sensations of the Spring! Then the veil is drawn aside, the doors are set open, and we become mystically conscious of contact with that which is distant and unseen. The bird which comes twittering in from foreign

sunshine, and the crocus which thrusts its bright head out of the dirty earth, seem to suggest resources beyond and beneath us, full of promise and strange revelation. Then we feel creeping over us that spirit of lassitude and day-dreaminess, which tries so sorely those who *must go* on turning the same dull crank. Then the familiar work looks like the old winter-clothes, dingy and out of time. Don't you recollect Dickens's description of the school which went droning on through the bright summer morning, and how the boys, who were smearing their slates and copy-books, could not help looking out of the open door at the waving branches and the hay? So, when the spring comes, and the soft green shews on the larch, and the outlines of all the other trees are marked by the swelling of their buds; and the Londoner hears the thrush in Kensington Gardens; and the grass in the Parks is sprinkled with rough Bohemians asleep on their backs or faces, like dead men after a battle—how we resent the office or the machine which importunately claims our toil; how the power of endurance seems to be laid aside with the greatcoat, and we long to defy authorities who keep our nose to the grindstone. This fit of rebellion, however, does not last long; we must keep pace with the busy summer. Meanwhile, it has an outlet at Easter and Whitsuntide, when even the poorest woman buys a new ribbon, at least for her child, and Sunday clothes blossom as the daisy; when excursion-trains are laden with the over-boiling of great towns, and relieve the spirit of resistance to the winter's drudgery.

But the spring-holiday is a short one. All Nature's work presses on so fast that we can only run out for a gulp of fresh air, and look forward to the autumn, when the harvest of the year has been gathered in, and we can lay down our tools for a while before we begin the old winter-work, with a renewed rejoicing in bright fires and strung nerves. For in spring and summer, we must spend the vigour with which we have been touched by the frost, and use the long quickening, ripening days with zeal.

Thus year after year we have our strength called out afresh, and see the past set aside, and a new face put upon the world. The furrows are filled up with smiles; the bald chapped skin grows rich and soft; old things fade away, and yet all remains the same.

We have many of these springs in a life, needed as much for the mind as for the body. When the spirit is chilled consciously for the first time in a man's experience, he may think, like an ignorant native of the tropics set down in a northern winter, that he is frozen up for life; but by the time he has made up his mind that he must give it up, and shrink into himself, lo! the days begin to grow longer, and the sunshine feels warmer, until, little by little, the flower of promise comes timidly out of its prison, and a generation of fresh living things proclaim the winter gone. So the spirit has its spring again and again. We are delivered from that which threatened to nip us up altogether, and when we have felt this a few times, we always look through a dreary season to a brighter. We know it must come, and that if the sun is a few miles further off for a while, we shall catch it up again, and be warmed through once more by the great fire of life.

That fire blazes up in Summer. Then is the dead heat of work. The full-blooded trees lose the

soft tints of spring, as if they had no mind for the mere prettiness of growth. The blossom has to be passed onwards to the fruit, the corn of a thousand cities has to be raised out of the earth, and so the strong sun gets up early and goes to bed late. The husbandman fights with the weeds which struggle for their share of the general life, until at last the summer's work comes to a crisis at the ingathering of the apple, the grape, and the ear.

Then there is a pause. Nature assumes the charm of ripe life. As one whose mature beauty shews when the chief struggles of manhood are being met, if not mostly past, so the tints of Autumn come out with a richness and tenderness such as the year has never shewn before, and the taste of nature's growth is sweet and sound; then, too, there are the loveliest skies. Autumn leaves are matched in autumn sunsets. It is the season of colour.

And it is the time of holiday. The sportsman in the stubble, the family at the sea-side, and the tourist with his knapsack, break loose from the pressure of the long summer-work. The wheat is stacked; the courts are closed; the colleges are empty; the clubs are silent. We get our wheels out of the ruts, and ramble away from the dull road of life, till the shortening September nights bring us back once more to the fireside, and we begin again the round of Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn, with, let us hope, a doubt which of the seasons we like best, since each has its proper charm and work.

## M I R K A B B E Y.

### CHAPTER IX.—IN THE LIBRARY.

OF all the pleasant rooms—and they were many—that were to be found at Mirk Abbey, the Library was by far the most charming. An architect might have said that the rest of the house had been somewhat sacrificed to it; a bookworm might have wished it gloomier and more retired; but for a lover of literature who was also a judge of beauty, it was well-nigh perfect. It was upon the first floor, and occupied the space of at least three reception-rooms. Long as it was, its excessive breadth might have been objected to, but that the effect of this was diminished to exactly the right proportions by huge double bookcases, which jutted out at right angles from the walls; thus the place was broken up, as it were, into a number of little studies, closed in upon three sides, but open, of course, towards what in a church would be called the aisle. This aisle, still a broad space, was set alternately with flower-vases and statues of white marble, though none of these were so tall as to hide from one standing at the door the view of the huge painted window at the southern end. In summer-time, this window was swung back, and all the garden scents and drowsy sounds—the level sweep of the scythe upon the lawn, and the murmur of the bees in the limes—were suffered to enter in. In winter, being closed, what light there was came glowing through the pictured panes, or through small windows far above the level of the eye, so that, in that well-warmed room, you could not tell that it was winter.



And yet this stately apartment was seldom used in either season. Letty would sometimes take a golly book from that part of the place marked in dull gold *Devotional*, but always carried it away to read in her own chamber; and Sir Richard now and then would refresh himself in the topographical department by taking down the *History of Wiltshire*, where all the Family Seats were duly pictured, and the linked sweetness of the genealogy of the owners long drawn out; but the Lisgards were not a reading race. Moreover, when they did read, it was chiefly out of modern books temporarily supplied by Mr Mudie, or works most glorious to behold as to their bindings, and without which no lady's drawing-room can be said to be complete, but which happily are rarely seen in libraries. My Lady herself had a goodly store of books in her own boudoir, including most of the French and English classics, all presented to her at divers times by her late husband, and all read, if not for her own pleasure, then for his; she therefore visited the Library more rarely than any one except Walter, who would as soon have thought of visiting the laundry. The last time she had gone thither was just after Miss Aynton's first arrival, when she had taken that young lady to see some curious missals there deposited, containing certain initial letters which Rose was desirous of copying.

She enters it now alone upon her return from that interview with Arthur Haldane at the Watersmeet—on a very different errand. She is no longer the kind if somewhat stately hostess, doing her young guest a pleasure, and at the same time perhaps taking a pardonable pride in shewing her the gem of the Abbey—its Library—for the first time. All pride, all stateliness, seem to have departed from that anxious face; her figure, however, is erect as of old, and her step as firm, as she closes the door of the vast room behind her, and walks towards its southern end. She looks neither to left nor right, for she is in search of none of those volumes which line the Library on either side. The place for which she is bound is in a far corner next the window, but very indirectly lighted by it; a small 'study,' where, if such a thing as dust were permitted to accumulate at the Abbey at all, it would certainly lie; and where it did lie; a spot unvisited for years, ever since it had been determined that Sir Richard's profession should be the Law, when certain books were taken from it, and carried up to town to stock his chambers; for over this little literary den was written Legal. Truly, as the phrase goes, 'it was not a place for a lady,' that dusky little chamber, lined with its bulky, calf-bound volumes, mostly in series, and often as not connected with one another by that emblem of their contents, a spider's web. What could my Lady have come hither to cull from such unpromising books? Is it possible that, unmindful of the proverb, that he who is his own lawyer has got a fool for his client, she can be in search of legal advice gratis? It is plain that she is in doubt, alas, even where to find the information of which she is in search. Her soft white hand wanders from tome to tome, and drags down one after another from its dusty shelf, until she has peopled the sunbeams anew with motes; but her large gray eyes find nothing to arrest them as they wander over the arid pages, although they grow weary with their task.

At last, however, they seem to have been more

fortunate. For the first time, my Lady takes her seat beside the slanting desk, and with her head supported by her hands, like one who is in need of all her wits, she reads on patiently enough. She cons the matter over twice or thrice, then sighs, and putting a thin slip of paper in the book to mark the place, returns it to its shelf, and pursues her search as before. Out of several score of volumes, four only seem to have served her purpose, and even from them it is evident that she has gleaned no comfort, but rather confirmation of some fear. Her face is more hopeless than it was a while ago; her sigh—and she sighs deep and often—has despair in it, as well as sorrow. From her wearied eyes, as she gazes upon the opened casement—through which comes a dreamy music in the flutter of the young leaves on a neighbouring elm, and the silver leap of the fountain on the lawn—tear follows tear, although she knows it not, and glides down the new-made furrows in her cheeks.

The luncheon gong was beaten an hour ago, and then was taken out into the garden for her especial behoof, and beaten again; but my Lady heard it not. She has neither eyes nor ears for the Present at all. She is thinking of some Future more dark and terrible than death itself, a day of dishonour and disgrace, that is creeping slowly but surely upon her and hers. The young leaves babble of it already, and the fountain with its talking water, and every whispering breath of April wind; and now she listens to them; and now she tries in vain to think and think; and now she listens to them perform again. They are comforters these mysterious voices, and do but pretend to prattle of her woes, in order that they may woo her to oblivion; for presently the tired arms can no more bear the burden of that piteous face, but sink down on the desk, and on those soft and rounded cushions droops the careworn head; and the eyelids that have scarce shut throughout the livelong night, nor through many a night before, are closed in slumber. The bee-music, the falling water, and the lullaby of the April leaves, through Nature's kindly hands, have given my Lady a nepenthe draught; and, thanks to it, she has forgotten her woes; nay, more, it has substituted for them joys borrowed from the unreturning Past, which, while we tarry in Dreamland, are as real as any.

My Lady is once more a fisherman's daughter, upon the banks of Blea. The river that flows beside her father's door is almost as salt as the sea itself, and twice a day the sea itself comes up and fills the creeks, and sets afloat the boats and colliers that lie sideways on the oozy beach. When it retires, she longs to be taken with it, for ere that tide can reach the open sea, it must needs pass by the port of Bleamouth, where her lover Ralph dwells. Young as she is, she has been wooed by others, and they better matches than this roving sailor, who, although he has saved a little money, does not know, says her father, how to keep it; and when that is gone, how will he keep himself save by going to sea again; much more then, how will he keep wife Lucy and a household? But these wise sayings are naught in Lucy's ears, in which love whispers always its smooth prophecies, and Ralph's rich laugh dispels the old man's forebodings, or plays upon them as though they were the very strings of mirth.

As handsome and stout-hearted a lad he is as

ever was fitted to make his own way through the world; able enough to thrust to left and right all jostling compeers, and by no means one to lack or to let those dear to him lack, while bread is to be got by sweat of brow. A smile comes o'er my Lady's face, and makes it young again, the while she dreams; for now she sees his signals in the coming boat, and now himself, and now he leaps ashore, and clasps her with his stalwart arm, and now her fingers play with the dark locks that curl above his tanned and manly brow. 'Tis more than half a lifetime back—but she knows not that—and the colour comes again to the wan cheek as though it were a maiden's, and once more love awakens in her widowed heart. He speaks; but ere his tongue can shape the words, a sense of doubt begins to perplex and pain her. She is a girl, and yet a woman in the vale of years; a fisher's daughter though a lady bred, with all the circumstances of rank and wealth about her; the voice is her lover's voice, and yet sounds strangely like another's; she is on the borderland 'twixt waking and sleeping, where, as in a dissolving view, the coming and the passing pictures interlace and exchange features, and the Dream and the Reality struggle together for life. Some one is speaking, however, that is certain, and the voice, as no woman can doubt, is tremulous and love-laden.

'And yet Rose—for I may call you Rose, may I not!—beautiful as these pictures are, I do not think they are more exquisite than those which you have painted yourself.'

'You flatter me, Sir Richard,' returned a second voice, with which my Lady was no better acquainted than with the first; for although she could not but be aware of who the speakers were, since they addressed one another by their names, she did not recognise her own son's speech, so changed it was from its ordinary polite but icy tones; while Rose Aynton's, upon the other hand, generally so quiet and submissive, were tinged with a mocking bitterness. If Sir Richard Lisgard was really about to lay his fortune at the feet of this penniless girl, it seemed strange indeed that she should reply to him in so unnatural a key. That the delicious joy that might well be at her heart should not be altogether repressible, was to be expected, and that her tongue should falter in endeavouring to conceal her triumph; but there was that in the young girl's accents different from anything that could be thus explained. Instead of trembling and hesitation in her speech, there was sheer scorn. Perhaps my Lady should have come forth at once from where she sat an involuntary eavesdropper; but it must be allowed that the temptation to remain was very great. Moreover, there were reasons why she could not explain her own presence in that particular portion of the Library; and again, should she disclose herself, the young people would feel no less uncomfortable than though they should even discover at last that their interview had not been so solitary as they imagined, for how did she know what had occurred while she was sleeping, and how should she persuade Miss Rose, even if her word was sufficient for Richard, that she had been sleeping during that critical period? True, if it was certain that the offer about to be made would be accepted, as indeed there was every likelihood that it would be, it was highly expedient—for various reasons known to my Lady—that she should step forward, and prevent matters from going

further; but so strange did the girl's voice strike upon her experienced ear, that Lady Lisgard waited in hopes of she scarce knew what—some almost miracle that might make her personal interposition unnecessary. At the same time her curiosity became so excessive during the protracted pause that followed Rose's 'You flatter me,' that she ventured to peer round the corner of the recess wherein she sat, which was now far more in shade than when she had entered it at noon.

They were standing not very far from her—those two unconscious young people—in front of a huge portfolio, which leant against a statue of Cupid and Psyche. The old, old tale of love which the sculpture typified was evidently being anew repeated by one at least of the living pair. Sir Richard, who had been turning over the pictures, kept his hand mechanically on one of them, but his eyes were fixed with a winning softness which even his mother had never seen in them before, upon his fair companion. Through one of the small western windows, the last gleam of the dying sun had found its way, and rested upon his crisp brown curls; his manly face glowed in a golden haze, while in his eyes there beamed a light that no sun can give, and mellowed than the rays of moon or star.

'I do not flatter you, sweet Rose,' he said; 'I love you.' She too had one hand upon the picture, and but for it, it seemed for a moment as though she would have fallen, so deadly pale she grew the while he spoke. Her eyelids quivered, and then slowly sank like two white rose-leaves on her cheek; while her unoccupied hand fell from her pale lips, and hung down by her side quite motionless.

'She cannot give him nay,' thought Lady Lisgard; 'the girl is overcome by her great joy.'

'Why do you not speak, dear Rose?' continued Sir Richard; 'or may I take your silence for consent, and thus set loving seal?'

He moved towards her, and round her dainty waist had placed his arm, when she sprang from him like a frightened fawn, who, although so seeming tame that it will hover nigh, and even follow one, darts off in terror when we strive to caress it.

'No, Sir Richard, no,' cried she; 'I cannot marry you—I dare not; and I will not. You are much too proud and arrogant for me.'

'But not to you, Rose,' pleaded the young man earnestly. 'You shall be my mistress, I your servant always. If I have ever been proud to you, I pray you to forgive it. I do beseech your pardon. It seemed at first that I was right to be so. You do not understand how one like me, so—'

'So well born and so rich,' interrupted the young girl quietly, looking up into his face with steady gaze. 'Yes, I understand that well, Sir Richard; and I, on the other hand, a dependent girl, so inferior to the sort of bride that you had a right to look for; it was well to keep me at a respectful distance.'

'No, not so, Rose,' cried the other hastily; 'I swear that you are inferior to no woman whom I have ever seen. But I did not wish—I thought, at first, that it would not be for your happiness.'

'—And your first thought was right, Sir Richard,' broke in the other bitterly. 'When you said to yourself, I will not encourage this young girl to think it possible that she should ever be the

mistress of Mirk Abbey, you were wise. You did right to hold yourself aloof, to behave with studied stiffness and formality, to let me know that though I might worship your exalted station, and admire your handsome face!—

'Rose! Rose!'

'Ay, it is Rose now, but it was Miss Aynton then,' continued she, beating her foot upon the floor. 'You determined, I say, within yourself that I should never so forget our relative positions as to misconstrue any attentions you might please to pay me; you held yourself so high, and stooped so condescendingly when you did stoop, that, upon my part at least, you resolved to nip the young beginnings of love, if such there should be, in their very bud. And, Sir Richard Lisgard, you succeeded.'

She rose to her full height, and pointed at him with her white hand contemptuously; her swanlike bosom moved, with rapid ebb and flow, in angry scorn; her curling lips gave wormwood to her words. And yet, although he felt her biting speech, the young man thought he had never seen her half so beautiful, half so worthy to be his wife.

'It is you who are proud now, Rose,' returned he, speaking with effort. 'I did not think that I could ever have heard such words from a woman's lips, and yet have sought to woo her. It is your turn to play the tyrant; but though, by Heaven, you look every inch a queen!—'

'I thank you, sir,' interrupted the girl coldly; 'but you need say no more. There is no necessity to offer me that one more chance which your generosity suggests to you. However incomprehensible and audacious coming from these humble lips may such an answer sound, Sir Richard Lisgard is refused.'

'Rose, dear Rose,' cried the young man passionately; 'if this be punishment, do not push it, I pray you, further than I can bear. There is something in your face in such ill accordance with your speech, that I cannot yet despair. Is it not possible, sweet girl, that at some future time—not now, but when you have seen how humble and devoted I can be, that you may teach your heart to love me?'

'No.' A full and rounded word, without a flaw of doubt to mar its clearness; a sentence irreversible; a judgment against which he felt there could be no appeal.

'But look you, Rose,' continued the baronet huskily; 'it is said that the true love grows after marriage. Suppose I am content to wed you on that chance, as in very truth I am. Look you, the scene is fair you behold through yonder window, and all that you see is mine. The Abbey, too, is mine, or will be so at my mother's death.' [A shadow of pain flits across my Lady's face, to hear her son speak thus so lightly of that loss, to please a girl whom he has not known six months, and who does not even love him.] 'I have broad acres, girl, fields, farms—a goodly rent-roll. My wife—the Lady Lisgard—will have more than enough of wealth to maintain her high position. Rose! have you no ambition?'

Miss Aynton here again grew strangely agitated; once more her cheeks grew pale, and her limbs trembled beneath her.

'Wretched girl! can she indeed be going to sell herself?' thought my Lady.

'There is nothing, pursued the wooer, perceiving his advantage, 'which will be out of your reach.

You will mix with those same persons to whose society you have been already accustomed, but in a very different relation towards them; you will be their equal in station, and they will be compelled to acknowledge that superiority in all other respects which they have refused to see in you while a mere dependent on your aunt's caprice. You will be enabled, I do not say to repay scorn for scorn—for your sweet nature is incapable of such revenge—but to extend to those who have wounded you forgiveness; to return each kindness fiftyfold.'

'Sir Richard Lisgard,' replied the young girl, speaking slowly, but with great distinctness, 'my answer has been given you already. It is true that your last arguments moved me, but not for the reason you imagine. I can marry you neither for love nor for money. You pique yourself, I think, on being a gentleman; being so, you will cease to press me further. I am conscious of the honour you have done me in this matter, and I thank you; but I decline your offer.'

The young man bowed, but without speaking. His features, which had softened to an extraordinary degree throughout their interview, began to assume a look even haughtier than before; his pride was all the greater since he had forced himself to stoop in vain.

'I have only one thing, then, to request, Miss Aynton,' said he after a long silence. 'I trust that you will not permit what has just occurred to curtail your stay at Mirk. It is understood that you are to remain here until after the celebration of—of my majority.' He could scarcely get the word out, poor fellow: he had looked forward so to her loving sympathy upon that proud occasion, which now seemed emptied of all its happy auguries.

'Do not fear, Sir Richard,' returned the girl with pity; 'no one shall know that the heir of Mirk has met with this disappointment. I will remain here, since you wish it. Your behaviour towards me needs no alteration to conceal the fact that you have ever been my lover.'

He had once more so reinstated himself in his proof-armour of pride, that the young baronet was not even aware that this last shaft had any barb.

'I thank you, Miss Aynton,' said he frigidly; 'if at any time it should be within my power to do you or yours a service, please to command me to the uttermost.'

He bowed, and strode away; she heard him close the door, neither softly nor in anger, and then his measured step upon the carpetless oaken stair without.

'I have not broken his heart, that's certain,' muttered Rose Aynton, with a crooked smile; 'the lover was lost in the patron soon indeed.'

#### CHAPTER X.—MISS ROSE AYNTON 'COMES OUT.'

For some minutes there was a total silence in the vast apartment, very oppressive to at least one of the two persons present. 'How long did this proud girl intend to remain and keep her a prisoner?' thought my Lady. She was rejoiced that Miss Aynton had refused her son, but at the same time angry with her for having done so. Rose must surely have had some motive for it far deeper than the mere revenging herself upon him for fancied slights. And yet Letty, who was in the girl's confidence, seemed certain that she had no accepted lover—no

previous engagement, such as alone seemed a sufficient reason for rejecting so advantageous a proposal. Perhaps she was even now repenting with tears the determination which had earned for her so dearly-bought a triumph. My Lady ventured to look forth once more. Yes, the poor girl was doubtless crying bitterly. Her face was hidden in her hands, but there was a convulsive movement of the round white shoulders that told its tale of inward grief. 'Poor thing, poor thing!' My Lady's kind heart yearned towards her now that she was sorry for her treatment of her son. Perhaps—not knowing Sir Richard as his mother knew him—she might even now make some hopeless endeavour to win him back to her. If she succeeded, that would be the worst thing that could possibly happen; and if she failed—as was almost certain—then she would have to suffer all this pain over again. Was it not my Lady's duty, then, to do her best to spare this unhappy motherless girl such bitter disappointment and humiliation, and to comfort her all she could under her present trouble? At all events, after some such manner Lady Lisgard reasoned. She did not stop to think of herself at all—of the imputation of eavesdropping to which she must necessarily expose herself—but stepped forth at once from the recess, and walked quietly to where Rose was standing. Her footsteps made no noise upon the thick matting that was laid down the centre of the polished floor. As she approached the unconscious girl, she was compelled to acknowledge to herself, for the first time, how strikingly attractive a young woman Miss Aynton was. She had certainly not the beauty of my lady's own daughter Letty, nor was she so tall, or perhaps so graceful; but her figure, although it was one likely to get coarse in time, was really perfect; her head, exquisitely set on well-shaped shoulders, was small, but bore such a profusion of black-brown hair as would have furnished half a dozen ordinary young ladies with *chignons*; her hands and arms were plump and white. Her eyes—Lady Lisgard thought that she had never seen such wondrous eyes as those which flashed upon her now in sudden recognition, then terror, then rage—not a trace of tears in them, and all the white face cold and still, not puckered up with woe, as she had expected to see it.

'So you have been a spectator, Lady Lisgard, of the late love-scene, have you?' said Rose Aynton in a low and suppressed tone. 'That was very generous and like a gentlewoman—in one's hostess, too.'

'Hush, Rose; do not say things that you may afterwards be sorry for. I will tell you how it happened.'

'Nay, do not trouble yourself, my Lady; I can guess. You knew Sir Richard had made an appointment with me here, and you wished to hear with what rapturous gratitude the penniless girl would consent to be his bride. I hope you *did* hear, madam, since you took such trouble.'

'Yes, Rose; I did hear. Your cruel words shall not rob you of my sympathy. I am sorry for my son, of course; but I am sorry for you also. I had been worried, vexed by many things of which it is not necessary to tell you; I came hither for solitude, and wearied out by many a sleepless night—nights of care, girl, such as I trust you may never know—I fell asleep in yonder recess. I never heard you enter the room at all. I woke up while you were speaking, but scarcely knew whether I ought to reveal myself or not. I heard you reject poor

Richard; then, when he had gone, I thought that you repented having done so. I was moved at seeing you look so white and still. I felt for you, Rose, with all my heart, and came out, when I might as easily have remained concealed, to try to comfort you. My poor dear girl!'

'That was very kind,' returned Rose quietly. 'But if I had behaved otherwise, would you then have welcomed me as your daughter-in-law? Please to tell me that.'

'If I should say "Yes," you would not believe me, Rose. So why ask me such a question. Moreover, the matter is settled now for ever. He would be a doting lover, indeed, who would forgive such a repulse; and Richard is the last man in all the world to do so.'

'Do you think so?' answered the young girl with an incredulous smile. 'You have forgotten surely your own youth, Lady Lisgard.'

'What know you of my youth, girl?' asked my Lady hastily, her pale face flushing with emotion.

'Nay, do not be angry,' returned the other coldly. 'I meant nothing, except, that when a woman is young she is very powerful. You say that I have lost Sir Richard, and therefore you pity me. Now, I will wager by this time to-morrow that I could win him back again.'

Was this the humble and submissive girl who came to Mirk four months ago, almost from school, and whom she had treated as a mother treats her child! The conscious belle of a London season could not have spoken with a greater confidence; the most practised husband-hunter with a cooler calculation. 'Come,' continued Rose, 'if you really are so sorry for me, Lady Lisgard, and so distressed upon your son's account, have I your permission to do my best to repair this common misfortune?'

My Lady could scarce conceal a shudder at the thought how nearly had this cold-blooded scheming girl become her daughter-in-law. Whatever objections she might have had to such a match before—and they were in themselves insuperable—seemed to have grown to twice their former proportions. The girl's determination and self-confidence alarmed her, too, for that result about which she had before felt so certain. At all hazards, she was resolved to prevent an attempt at reconciliation being made.

'No, Rose; I do not wish you to try to recover the affections of Sir Richard.'

'So, so; then we have the truth at last, Lady Lisgard. You are not willing that I should be daughter-in-law of yours. You grudge me such great good-fortune as to be allied with the race of Lisgards: and yet it fell to your own lot—as I have heard—even in a more unexpected manner.'

'Miss Aynton, what I was is no affair of yours,' replied my Lady with quivering lips. 'You have only to remember what I am.'

'I do so, madam, very well. I see you held in honour by all people, and without doubt, justly. Your position is indeed to me an object of admiration, perhaps I may add, even of envy. Is it not natural that it should be so? And when your son offers to lift me from my present low estate to place me as high, why should I hesitate to take advantage of such a proposal? I have refused him, it is true; but now, being, as you say, repentant, why should I not strive to recover what I have let slip—wealth, honours, title?—'

'Rose Aynton,' returned my Lady, clasping the girl's white wrist, and speaking in very earnest but



broken tones, 'I warn you, do not do it. Even if you succeed, you may not win all you dream of. Strive not, I charge you, for your own sake, to undo what has been done. I have reasons for what I say beyond any that you can guess. If you would be happy, do not endeavour to ally yourself with this family.'

'Lady Lisgard, what *can* you mean?' ejaculated the girl, her white face flushed at last, her wide flashing eyes no longer hard and cynical, and her every feature impatient for reply.

'I mean simply what I say. Seek not to be Richard's wife. If you want money—and I know from your own lips it is not love which prompts you—you shall have such wealth as is mine to give. I had meant it for a different purpose; but that is no matter. Only do not seek to win back my son; and when you leave us, I will bless you for your forbearance—and for your silence, Rose.'

'Yes, Lady Lisgard, I will say nothing of all this,' returned the girl thoughtfully after a short pause. 'I promise you, too, that I will never speak of love to Sir Richard further; and as for your offer of a bribe, though I do not know that I have ever shewn myself so greedy as to deserve it—I will forgive you even that.'

'Thank you, thank you, Rose,' answered my Lady eagerly. 'I dare say, in my haste and trouble, I may have said things to offend you, and if so, I am very sorry. You have doubtless your troubles too.'

'Yes, I have,' answered the girl gravely; 'and I should like to be alone with them for a little, Lady Lisgard, unless you have anything else to ask of me.'

'Nothing, Rose—nothing; you have granted all I wished. You will be as undisturbed here as in your own apartment; nay, even more so; for Letty will not think of coming here to seek you out. Nobody ever comes into the Library.'

My Lady leaned forward as she spoke, and kissed the girl's smooth brow, cold as a tablet of alabaster, then softly left the room.

Rose Aynton stood for a full minute, listening, eager and motionless as Echo herself, before she stepped to the door, and turned the key.

'No more spying, my Lady!' ejaculated she; 'my hostess has her secrets, it seems, as well as I. It would be well if I could discover hers before she found out mine. What could she mean by cautioning me, for my own sake, not to ally myself with the Lisgards? She is not a fool to think to frighten me with a mere gipsy's warning—threatening much, but meaning nothing. What reasons can those be against my becoming her daughter-in-law, which are "beyond any that I can guess?" If I could only get this proud dame beneath my thumb, then, indeed, I might recompense myself somewhat for having missed Sir Richard. To think that I should have lost a prize like that through mere humility of mind! "Yet even if you succeed," said she, "you may not win all you dream of." Those were her very words. "Haste and trouble" alone could never have suggested them to her, although they may have made her indiscreet enough to utter them. What has put my Lady in such low spirits of late, and kept her so moped up within the Abbey walls? How came she alone here in this place, whither, as she says, "No one ever comes?" She must have been hidden in yonder recess in the far corner, or we must needs have seen her, when my love-sick swain and I were walking up and down.'

Swift and noiseless, like some beautiful wild beast upon the trail, Rose Aynton crossed the room, and scanned, with a cruel look in her dark eyes, the little study over which was printed *Legal*.

'I never heard that my Lady was given to law,' muttered she derisively. 'True, she said that she had been sent to sleep, a thing which any one of these folios one might think would compass. But why did she come hither to read at all? There must have been something of interest to attract her. The books on this side do not seem to have been touched for ages; but here—yes, some one has been to these quite lately, for the dust has been disturbed, and here, if I mistake not, is the dainty print of my Lady's fingers. We are getting warm, as the children say at Hide-and-Seek. What have we here? A slip of paper for a marker, torn cross-wise from an envelope with *Lad* upon it. It was surely imprudent of my Lady to use her own address for such a purpose. *Wills!* Ah, she has been studying the art of making wills, I dare say. Considering Sir Richard is already so well off—and since I am not to be his wife—it is to be hoped she will leave her money to son Walter; and some, too, to poor dear Letty, for she is one who will never learn to help herself in this world. It is well for her that she has not to live by her wits. If she had been in my position, she would have been a governess. Yes, it's all about Wills this book. And why should not my Lady make a will, being of ripe age, and yet not old enough to sniff that smell of the charnel-house, which renders the operation so unpleasant a duty to the aged. I am afraid—unless, indeed, I could find the will itself—that I have but discovered a mare's nest after all. However, here are more book-markers; come, let us combine our information. *Succession!* That's only the same story. *Illegitimacy!* Great Heaven, but this is more than I had bargained for!'

The girl stepped swiftly to the open window, and pushed the heavy folds of hair behind her ears. 'I feel my blood all rushing to my brain, and roaring "Ruin!"' murmured she. 'If this sudden fear has any real foundation, then indeed am I hoist with my own petard. No wonder she warned me against alliance with her race, if what I here suspect is true. They will need well-born suitors themselves, she meant, to make up for what is lacking in their blood, and mayhap money too. The will of old Sir Robert may be disputed. The Succession—but no, I had forgotten—there is no one to succeed save her two sons, for they have not a relative beyond themselves in the world, these Lisgards; but the title—that would be lost, of course. That's what she hinted when she said I might not gain the thing I counted on, even though I won Sir Richard. He cannot know of it; he could not be so proud if he had the least suspicion of any blot in his own scutcheon. How he would wither if one said to him: "Thou Bastard!" And yet I gravely doubt whether this discreet madam, his mother, has not one day tripped. "What know you of my youth, girl?" cried she a while ago, white, as I thought, with anger; but it was fear, it seems. She comes here alone to find out for herself by study what secret course to follow, or what hidden dangers to avoid, having no counsellor in whom she can confide. That seems so far certain, or she would surely ask her son himself, being a lawyer, or that wise Mr Arthur Haldane, whom I so honestly dislike, for their advice. It may be all this bodes as

ill for Walter as for his brother; it may be that it bodes the younger the best of fortune, and the elder the worst. That would be a brave day, indeed, for some one, on which the proud young baronet should sink to plain Mr Richard, and the poor captain rise to be Sir Walter Lisgard! And, again, there may be nothing in all this, after all. Time will doubtless shew, and it shall be my task to hurry Time's footsteps towards the discovery.'

#### EDIBLE REPTILES.

MAN, whether civilised or savage, has an instinctive repugnance to reptiles of every kind and degree, and yet there is not one of the four families into which naturalists divide the race that does not minister to his sustenance in some measure. Ugly and repulsive as the saurian, ophidian, batrachian, and chelonian tribes may be, they each contribute something to the dietary of humanity.

The crocodile, worshipped in one part of Egypt, was eaten in another. Herodotus informs us the people of Apollonopolis were compelled by law to eat crocodiles, to revenge the death of a princess who fell a victim to saurian appetite. The inhabitants of Elephantina did from choice what the Apollonopolians did from compulsion, and modern Egyptians follow their example when they have a chance, not being deterred by the risk of perpetrating cannibalism at second-hand. Crocodile-flesh is publicly sold in the meat-markets of Sennaar, and Pallegoix declares he saw half a hundred crocodiles hanging up for sale (as sheep hang in our butchers' shops) in a market-place in Siam. Burekhardt compares crocodile-meat to veal, but it has a dirty hue and faint fishy odour, of which veal is innocent, and, unless the musk-glands are removed previous to cooking, the dish is intolerable. Sherard Osborne tried an alligator-cutlet, and, although he did not find it absolutely uneatable, he confesses it was not over-nice; the best that could be said of it being, that it was equal to a very bad veal-cutlet. Winwood Reade likens alligator to something between pork and cod, with the addition of a flavour of musk. Nienhoff's taste was of a different order, or he was luckier in the specimens upon which he experimented, for he avers, that boiled or fried in butter, cayman-meat is quite equal to rabbit. Both crocodile and alligator eggs are held in estimation. The Siamese consider the first an especial dainty; while the natives of Madagascar are particularly partial to the latter, and lay up a store of them, first removing the shell, and then boiling the eggs, and drying them in the sun. The Mandingoes prefer crocodile-eggs when the young reptile within has attained to the length of a man's finger. M. Linaut was tempted, by the evident enjoyment of his African friends, to take his share of a fricassee of crocodile-eggs; but the combination of rancid oil and musk proved too much for an appetite not to the manner born. Ancient physicians prescribed boiled crocodile for sciatica, lumbago, and chronic coughs; crocodile-blood for ophthalmia; and crocodile-fat in cases of fever.

The iguana, with its scaly, black-spotted, green

coat is, as far as externals go, more repulsive even than crocodile or cayman; but, living chiefly upon fruits, flowers, and leaves, its flesh is as white as that of the chicken, and equally palatable. Catesby lauds it to the skies, as at once delicate, delicious, and digestible. The iguana affords a valuable supply of food to the people of the Bahamas. The reptiles are hunted down with dogs, their mouths sewn up, to prevent them using their teeth, and so carried alive to market. Those retained for home-consumption are killed, salted, and barrelled. Iguana is generally served up boiled, with a calabash full of clarified iguana-fat, into which the meat is dipped as it is eaten. The Singhalese know the iguana as the *tallygoa*, and keep dogs for the purpose of catching it; with them, it is valued not only as an article of food, but also as a remedial agent. They apply the fat as an external remedy for cutaneous diseases, and hold the tongue, plucked from the living reptile, and swallowed whole, a certain cure for consumption. The eggs of the iguana are in as high favour as its flesh; they are said to resemble hens' eggs in taste, but are entirely filled with yolk, and never become hard in cooking. The horned iguana of St Domingo is appreciated by West Indian lovers of good living, its flesh resembling that of the roebuck. A very different verdict is passed, by one who ought to have been a good judge, upon the iguanas of New Holland. They are thus described by Dampier: 'Of the same shape and size with other guanans, but differing from them in three remarkable particulars; for these had a larger and uglier head, and had no tail, and at the rump, instead of the tail there, they had a stump of a tail, which appeared like another head, but not really such, being without mouth or eyes; the legs also seemed all four to be fore-legs, and to be made as if to go indifferently head or tail foremost. They were speckled black and yellow like toads, and had scales or knobs on their backs like those of crocodiles. Their livers are spotted black and yellow, and the body when opened hath an unsavoury smell. The guanans I have observed to be very good meat, and I have often eaten of them with pleasure; but though I have eaten of snakes, crocodiles, alligators, and many creatures that look frightfully enough, and there are but few I should be afraid to eat of, if pressed by hunger, yet I think my stomach would scarce have served to venture upon these New Holland guanans, both the looks and the smell of them being so offensive.'

The common green lizard is eaten by many African tribes; and the flesh of the gray lizard was once in great European repute for various medicinal purposes. This species was at one time so abundant in the environs of Vienna, that Laurenti tried to induce the poor of that capital to become lizard-eaters, telling them that lizard-meat, either baked or fried, was not only wholesome, but productive of appetite. His philanthropic endeavour failed, perhaps because the hungry Viennese wanted something to allay rather than increase their appetites.

Marco Polo tells us that the hunters of Carazan

obtained a very high price for the serpents they happened to kill, the people of Cathay counting serpent-meat as the most delicate of food. Brazilians eat a green and yellow snake called the *haninana*; Bushmen and Bakalahari relish the African python; negroes can make a hearty meal on rattlesnake; and the anacondas and other boas supply the natives of the countries favoured by their presence with wholesome and nourishing food. The lazy folks of King George's Sound reverse Mrs Glasse's maxim, and cook their snakes before they catch them, by setting fire to the grass around their encampments, picking up the broiled reptiles from the ashes at their leisure. The adder is considered savoury meat by the Sardinians, and forms a welcome ingredient in their broths and soups; nor are the Sardinians alone in their taste, for the adder is eaten, as a matter of course, in many of the provinces of France.

The doctors of old had great faith in the virtue of frog's flesh, as at once restorative, diluent, analeptic, and antiscorbutic, and invaluable in cases of consumption and affections of the chest. Pliny says frogs boiled in vinegar are an excellent remedy for the toothache. Dioscorides recommended them to be cooked in salt and oil as an antidote to serpent-poison; and another ancient physician cured a fistula, or said he did, by administering a frog's heart every morning as a pill. Thanks to our caricaturists and song-writers, frog-eating and France are indissolubly connected together, as if none but our gallant neighbours indulged in batrachian dainties, while, in truth, they only share the propensity with Belgians, Germans, and Italians. Andrew Borde, recording the manners and customs of European nations in the time of Henry VIII, mentions with disgust that the people of Lombardy eat frogs, 'guts and all,' while he says nothing about the French doing the like. In fact, it was not till the middle of the sixteenth century that the frog obtained a place at continental dinner-tables. Even now, French epicures confine themselves to dishes composed of the hind-quarters of the little reptile, dressed in wine, or served with white sauce; but the Germans, less wasteful, make use of every part except the skin and intestines. The particular species in favour for culinary purposes is that known as the *Rana esculenta*, or green frog, although the red frog, more familiar to English eyes, is eaten in some places, and thought in no way inferior to his more popular relative. The frog is in the best condition for the table in autumn, just when he takes to the water for the winter, but is most eaten in spring, from the simple reason that he is easier caught at that season. He is captured in several ways: sometimes by means of lines baited with scarlet-cloth, sometimes a net is used, sometimes a rake, or he is pursued at night with torches. A hundred years ago, a shrewd native of Auvergne made a fortune by forming a frog-preserve, from which he supplied the capital. Similar nurseries help to satisfy the modern demand for this peculiar luxury, but that demand is gradually decreasing, although, at certain times of the year, plenty of frogs may be seen in both French and Italian markets.

Dr Livingstone speaks eulogistically of a large African frog called the *matlametlo*, of which his children partook with eagerness and delight. This monster frog measures nearly half a foot, with a breadth of four and a half inches, and when cooked, looks very much like a chicken. After a thunder-

shower, the pools, even in the driest parts of the African desert, are alive with *matlametloes*; and the natives, not unnaturally, believe that they are born of the thunder-cloud, and descend to earth with the rain. During the season of drought, the *matlametlo* takes up his abode in a hole of his own making at the root of certain bushes, and as he seldom emerges from his retreat, a large variety of spider spins his web across the orifice, and provides the tenant gratuitously with a screen; but the gift often proves a fatal one, serving to guide the hungry Bushman to the reptile's hiding-place. The *matlametlo* would make a worthy companion-dish to the bull-frog, which is considered equal to fowl in the Antilles.

Among the various temptations to extravagance exhibited in the Siamese market-places, nothing astonished Turpin more than a number of hideous ball-shaped toads, spitted ready for the cook. Judging from the abundant supply, there would seem to be a general demand for the *houhan*—a name given to this edible toad in imitation of its cry, which is so loud that two of them are sufficient 'to disturb a whole country.' The common toad is habitually eaten by Africans, to whom nothing comes amiss in the shape of food, and there is small doubt that it is often substituted for the frog in countries where frog-eating prevails.

The green sea-turtle is the only reptile that ever finds its way to an Englishman's table, and although the stout bucaners, who made every sea familiar with Old England's flag, had long before borne witness to its merits, the turtle, a hundred years ago, was still a rarity here; at least, we may fairly infer so from the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1753 thinking the arrival of a turtle sent by Lord Anson to the gentlemen of White's Chocolate House an event worthy of record. There are several species of sea-turtle, but the green turtle is at once the commonest and best. The London market receives its chief supply from Jamaica; but Ascension Island, the Antilles, and the Alligator Islands are the favourite resorts of these much-prized reptiles, who travel hundreds of miles in order to deposit their eggs, shoals of them arriving at those favoured places regularly every year between April and September. From long practice, the people of the Bahamas are adepts at turtle-catching, and Catesby gives us a very amusing account of the way they go to work. 'In April, they go in little boats to Cuba and other neighbouring islands, where, in the evening, and especially in moonlight nights, they watch the going and returning of the turtles to and from their nests, at which time they turn them on their backs, where they leave them, and proceed on, turning all they meet, for they cannot get on their feet again when once turned. Some are so large that it requires three men to turn one of them. The way by which the turtle are most commonly taken is by striking them with a small iron peg of two inches long, put in a socket at the end of a staff twelve feet long. Two men usually set out for this work in a little light boat or canoe, one to row and gently steer the boat, while the other stands at the head of it with his striker. The turtle are sometimes discovered by their swimming with their head and back out of the water, but are oftener discovered lying at the bottom, a fathom or more deep. If a turtle perceives he is discovered, he starts up to make his escape; the men in the boat pursuing him, endeavouring to keep sight of him, which they often

lose, and recover again by the turtle putting his nose out of the water to breathe.' Tired out, the turtle at length sinks, to fall a victim to the striker, and be hauled into the boat. Sometimes they are taken by divers, who bring them up from the bottom by main force.

Turtles' eggs figure among the exports of Sarawak. The Malays watch the turtles at work depositing their eggs on the broad sandy flats in Sarawak Bay, and mark the places with little flags. In Siam, the eggs are in equal favour, and one variety of river-turtle is reserved for the royal service, the rivers being carefully watched at night by soldiers, who brand the turtles with the royal mark as fast as they can catch them, and send the eggs to the king's palace. One of the great turtles of the Amazon is a fair load for a strong Indian; and so abundant were they in Brazil when Condamine visited that country in 1740, that he says they sufficed for the sustenance of the people. They are still plentiful. During his two years' stay at Ega, Mr Bates became so surfeited with turtle, that the very smell of it became intolerable to him, and he turned in disgust from the cloying food, although he had nothing else wherewith to appease his hunger. Every house at Ega has its curral or turtle-pond, which is stocked for the winter, when the waters of the Amazon are low.

The Brazilians have several ways of cooking turtle. Steaks cut from the breast and roasted, make an excellent dish; the lean parts are roasted on spits, and sausages are made of the stomach, while the entrails serve as the basis of soup. The most usual method of preparation, however, is the simple one of boiling the turtle in his own shell, or in kettles full of the juice of the mandioca root. Newly-hatched turtles, with the remains of the yolk still inside them, are reckoned especially delicious, and numbers of immature turtles are sacrificed to this taste, while an immense quantity of eggs are annually destroyed for the manufacture of oil. Thanks to this extravagance, and the increase of communication with Europe, turtle has risen wonderfully in price, nine shillings being the market-value now of turtle that in 1850 could have been bought for exactly as many pence.

Next in quality to the green turtle comes the hawkbill or imbricated turtle, which supplies the world with tortoise-shell; then the logger-head; and lastly, the trunk-turtle, of which the flesh and shell are so soft that the finger may easily be pushed into them. When Dampier visited the Galapagos Islands, he was struck by the abundant supply of what he calls land-turtles, of monstrous size; and Lacaille, the astronomer, was astonished, many years afterwards, by seeing the coast apparently paved with shell—which shell proved, on examination, to belong to troops of living tortoises of great size and weight, probably of the species known as the Indian tortoise. The Greek tortoise is eaten in Southern Europe, the Greeks themselves drinking its blood, cooking its eggs, and satisfying their Lenten appetites with its flesh, which, for the time being, is allowed to reckon as fish. The speckled tortoise makes its appearance in German markets, for which the Prussian peasants fatten it on bread and lettuce-leaves; and the mud tortoise, or *La Bourbeuse*, is thought to make a very nice dish in Provence and Languedoc, not the least of its merits being that it is as cheap as it is palatable.

## TWILIGHT.

THE last bright wave of day hath ebb'd  
From off the western strand,  
And now, with balmyest repose,  
Blessing the darkened land,  
Twilight and Peace from heaven descend  
Together hand in hand.

The reaper's long day's work is done  
Among the glowing grain;  
The chestnut boughs have swept the sides  
Of the last loaded wain;  
Only the cricket's shrill voice sings  
Along the leafy lane.

A soft obscurity lies round  
Meadow, and road, and stream;  
Under entangled blue-bell stems,  
Moveth the glow-worm's beam;  
And white across the dusky path,  
The dog-rose petals gleam.

Anon the great dor-beetle sails,  
With musical deep boom,  
From where the hornbeam branches make  
A cool and odorous gloom,  
Into the jasmine's pendent mass  
Of silvery star-bloom.

All silently the cereus buds  
Their gentle eyes unclose;  
No whisper stirs the lightest leaf  
Of the old yellow rose,  
That round the mossy garden-wall  
Long scented garlands throws.

Flowers grassy-couch'd in wood and dell  
Know that the night is nigh,  
For the first fairy bells of dew  
Have rung their lullaby;  
Faintly from out the distant brake  
I hear the fern-owl cry;

And aromatic breathings come  
From the far thymy lea,  
Bringing the sweet sad memories  
Of summer eves to me,  
That, in the freshness of their joy,  
Ah, never more shall be!

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